AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) A biologically pure culture of a bacterial strain that oxidizes nitrite to nitrate, wherein the 16S rDNA of the bacterial strain has a nucleotide sequence comprising SEQ ID NO:1~~, and hybridization to SEQ ID NO:1 occurs under the following stringent conditions: hybridization in 30% formamide, 0.9 M NaCl, 0.01% sodium dodecyl sulphate, 20 mM Tris/HCl pH 7.4 at 46 °C, and washing with 120 mM NaCl, 5 mM EDTA, 0.01% sodium dodecyl sulphate, and 20 mM Tris/HCl at 48 °C~~.

4-9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently amended) A composition, comprising a concentrated isolated bacterial strain that oxidizes nitrite to nitrate wherein the 16S rDNA of the bacterial strain has a nucleotide sequence comprising SEQ ID NO:1~~, wherein hybridization to SEQ ID NO:1 occurs under the following stringent conditions: hybridization in 30% formamide, 0.9 M NaCl, 0.01% sodium dodecyl sulphate, 20 mM Tris/HCl pH 7.4 at 46 °C, and washing with 120 mM NaCl, 5 mM EDTA, 0.01% sodium dodecyl sulphate, and 20 mM Tris/HCl at 48 °C~~.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Original) The composition of claim 10, further comprising a microorganism selected from the group consisting of ammonia-oxidizing organisms, nitrite-oxidizing microorganisms, nitrate-reducing microorganisms, heterotrophic microorganisms and combinations thereof.

13-48. (Canceled).

49. (Currently amended) A composition comprising nitrite-oxidizing bacteria and ammonia-

oxidizing bacteria, present in an approximately 1:3 ratio, wherein the nitrite-oxidizing bacteria comprises an isolated bacterial strain having 16S rDNA including a nucleotide sequence identical to SEQ ID NO:1~~, and hybridization to SEQ ID NO:1 occurs under the following stringent conditions: hybridization in 30% formamide, 0.9 M NaCl, 0.01% sodium dodecyl sulphate, 20 mM Tris/HCl pH 7.4 at 46 °C, and washing with 120 mM NaCl, 5 mM EDTA, 0.01% sodium dodecyl sulphate, and 20 mM Tris/HCl at 48 °C~~.